

Refugee Advisory Board Meeting
June 30, 2008
Department of Community & Culture
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Refugee Advisory Board Members: Palmer DePaulis, Gerald Brown, Macleans Geo Ja-Ja, Lina Smith, David Everitt, Aden Batar, Saran Nahas, Amanda Singer (for Lisa-Michele Church), Zaw Than Htike, Patrick Poulin, Rebecca Sanchez (for Michael Gallegos), Marty Kelly (for Brenda Hales), Abdul Aljareh

Other Attendees: Claudia Nakano, Yolanda Francisco-Nez, Ghulam Hasnain, Julia Lyon, Bawmu Everest, Laura Durrant, Norman Nakamura, Teresa Garrett, Irina Pierpont, Catherine Hamilton, James Whitaker, Mary Gehman-Smith

Welcome and Opening Business

Palmer DePaulis called the meeting to order and introductions were made. He reported that, initially, the board meeting is scheduled for the last Monday of each month from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. The agenda is complex and one hour does not appear to be adequate. We will be discussing extending the meeting later today.

Palmer called for approval of the June 2, 2008 meeting Minutes. The Minutes were received without objection.

Finalization of the Charter

Palmer distributed a revised draft of the Charter, which includes a preamble. Any further suggestions should be sent directly to him.

Finalization of the Charter will be put on next month's agenda.

Refugee Services Office Operational Issues

- Gerald Brown introduced the Refugee Services Office (RSO) staff: Norman Nakamura, Irina Pierpont, Zaw Than Htike, Bawmu Everest, Laura Durrant and Mary Gehman-Smith. Zaw and Bawmu, along with Pah T'May, have been hired as interpreters and are providing case management. Recently, Mona Guet was hired as a Program Specialist and will be working on capacity building. Mona is a refugee from Chad and currently works at the Asian Association of Utah;

- Last week, RSO's first Request for Procurement (RFP) went out. All questions should be directed to Gerald. This RFP combines program goals, case management for two years, a volunteer system, mentor organizations working with refugees, community organizations teaching health, safety and citizenship. This RFP is available on DWS' website;
- Dr. Geo Ja-Ja wants to ensure this Advisory Board is involved when proposals are evaluated and disseminated into the community. He is involved with communities who bid for proposal.
- Palmer DePaulis reported he and Gerald Brown recently provided an update on the \$200,000 to the Legislative Management Committee. This update was successful, questions were asked and the comments were good. A few days later, the Interim Workforce Services and Community & Economic Development Committee was briefed. This Committee supports refugee efforts;
- Palmer added due to the urgency of this money, which becomes available July 1, 2008, they moved ahead with the process on this first initial grant, making it available to the agencies. RSO is receptive to feedback on how future RFPs can work. Gerald will report on this process in future meetings;
- Teresa Garrett suggested the RFP process could be the responsibility of one of the subcommittees;
- Gerald reported one of his priorities is case management for refugees for the first two years;
- He is anxious for the formation of the subcommittees particularly the fundraising;
- Dr. David Sundwall recently completed a home visit. Gerald urges all to do the same;
- 45% of the caseload is expected in the last quarter of this year;

Resettlement Agency Statistics

Aden Batar, Catholic Community Services (CCS) reported the following:

- Statistical information is broken down by calendar year. The majority of refugees are arriving from Burma and Burundi. Between January 1 and June 30, 2008, CCS has resettled 245 refugees;
- The National Resettlement office has attempted to spread out the amount of arrivals per month, but so far that has not happened;
- CCS recently moved to a new facility;

- This year, unaccompanied refugee minors will be arriving, mainly from Burma. They will be arriving without their parents and will be placed in foster care homes. These children may not be seen through the refugee program but will be going through the health program and the school system. Families will care for them until they reach the age of majority or when they are reunited with their families. Adoption is not an option. Marty Kelly added Adult Education Services are available to unaccompanied minors until they can enroll in school;
- Batar distributed information on the *Operational Guidance to Resettlement Agencies* mandated by the U.S. Department of State and provided information on the core services CCS provides.
- Ghulam Hasnain asked about implementation of CCS' program. He asked how many families have been resettled and if the outcomes were successful. Batar added CCS provides reports to their national office with copies to the State Department and the National Office of Resettlement. It is required that once in every three years, a site monitoring be completed to ensure they are in compliance. Each year, CCS does an internal audit. Resettlement agencies have contracts with State entities such as DWS and the County and are monitored by these as well;
- Dr. Geo Ja-Ja expressed concern regarding recent issues raised in newspaper articles. He would like to know how successful and self-sufficient refugees are after 180 days. He believes the quality of service is more important than the numbers reported. He wants to make life better for the refugees. He stated all one needs to do is complete a home visit and the refugees will let you know how they have been served. He believes there are gaps in services
- Batar added resettlement agencies cannot solve all refugee problems. They can't provide everything within the first six months, just the basics. He asked for specific case information and he will address it. He believes the agencies are going up and beyond what is required.

Palmer stated gaps and barriers will be identified, with the focus on identifying resources and strengthening the system. This Board needs to address the gaps and funding issues. He wants to focus on the positive and move forward.

The group discussed alternatives to making resettlement more even:

- Batar explained refugee arrivals are based on the Federal fiscal year;
- Suggestions should be sent to Gerald Brown and could be discussed with the National Office of Resettlement;
- Norman Nakamura added the interviewing and application process is completed overseas by the Department of Homeland Security. One of the things they have been able to do is work with NCIS and Refugee Corp. The goal is to improve the flow of 30,000 applicants and remove some of the backlog. This may take a couple of years to level out.

Subcommittee Discussion

Palmer DePaulis called for suggestions on subcommittees:

1. Housing Committee - Michael Gallegos and Jane Shock currently co-chair a County housing committee. This committee could be incorporated into this body and ensure experience;
2. Fundraising Committee (as outlined as one of the functions of this Board). The single, most important thing we can do is to get case management from the date of arrival to the two-year mark and to do this, money needs to be raised. Hand in hand is how this money would be spent once raised;
3. Resettlement Oversight Committee - This committee would measure performances and see how families are doing two years out. Batar would like to see the success of the Oversight Committee.
4. Case Management Committee - This committee would be formed to increase case management opportunities so that refugees would have consistent support for at least two years after resettlement. This would keep refugees from falling through the cracks.
5. Refugee Youth Committee - Suggested by David Everitt. Gerald added down the road this would make sense, but for now, we need to address basic needs. Gerald believes besides case management, access to main services is the priority. Teresa Garrett believes, however, that this committee would be good as a proactive measure to keep kids out of jail;
6. Troubleshooting Committee, also known as the Barriers and Gaps Committee. Suggested by Lina Smith. This would allow urgent needs to be addressed and accomplishments measured. Dr. Geo Ja-Ja added as problems are reported to Gerald Brown, they are taken to the Gaps

& Barriers committee and then brought to this Board for resolution.
Action items could be part of this meeting.

Future Meetings

Rebecca Sanchez suggested this meeting be moved to the last Thursday of each month from 4-6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 31 will be the first meeting. The group agreed.